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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (04/20): PALESTINIANS: NEW
ISRAELI GOVERNMENT NOT SERIOUS ABOUT PEACE

Main Stories:

Al-Ayyam leads with, Al-Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida front page, that Israeli Defense Minister Barak favors proposing "a new initiative" for a comprehensive, regional peace, based in part on the Arab Peace Initiative. According to coverage, Barak's initiative would include parallel talks with Palestinians and Syria. In related news, Al-Ayyam's front page announces that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's visit to the U.S. will coincide with Palestinian Authority President Abbas' U.S. visit on May 18, 19.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida and Al-Ayyam front page reports about Special Envoy Mitchell's visit to Saudi Arabia on April 19. According to coverage, Mitchell and Saudi King Abdullah discussed the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the two-state solution based on the Arab Peace Initiative.

Al-Quds leads with news of concern over "extremely dangerous" Israeli excavations that could damage the eastern wall of the Al Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem. Head of the Al-Aqsa Mosque Construction Committee called for the formation of an Arab-Islamic committee to mobilize global support to oblige Israeli to respect international agreements and protect Arab patrimony in Jerusalem. In related news, front pages ran April 18, 19 coverage of "Israeli restrictions denying access to clergy men and worshippers at the Holy Sepulcher" church in Jerusalem on Orthodox Easter. Reporting highlighted Palestinian Authority Presidency denunciation of, "the cruelty that reached its peak when Assyrian and Coptic clergymen were beaten by Israeli Police with batons in the Church's courtyard."

Al-Quds front pages reports citing Israeli daily Haaretz on the U.S. call on Israel to halt evictions of Palestinian families in the

Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem. The story highlights that residents have lived in their homes for over 50 years and were visited by U.S. Consulate General, Jerusalem officials last week. The families' lawyer told press that Secretary Clinton is closely following the issue. The report adds that the U.S. is also monitoring "settlement activities" in East Jerusalem and highlights Clinton's comments from her last visit to the region in which she noted that settlements and eviction policies not in keeping with the Road Map and "not helpful" to the peace process.

Al-Quds front page cites DPA in noting that Israeli Premier Netanyahu has softened his stance on Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state. In response to U.S. State Department pressure, reporting reveals that Netanyahu has dropped the demand as a precondition to talks with Palestinians but will insist that such recognition be part of any final peace agreement.

All dailies report on the shooting in the leg of Hamas leader and former Palestinian Legislative Council member Hamid Al-Bitawi in Nablus on April 19. According to coverage, a Palestinian Authority (PA) security force officer in civilian clothes used his personal weapon to shoot Bitawi. The attack was condemned by a Nablus Governorate spokesperson who denied any involvement of the PA security forces, calling it a "personal" attack.

Weekend Stories

Sunday, April 19, 2009

Al Quds' front page headlined, "Mitchell: A two-state solution is

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the basis for ending the conflict," quoting the Special Envoy from his April 18 press availability with Egyptian Foreign Minister Abul Ghayt. Mitchell's statement was quoted at length and Ghayt is noted explaining that Mitchell briefed Egyptian President Mubarak on meetings with officials in the region.

Al Quds and Al Ayyam ran front page coverage on the meeting of Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sultanov in Ramallah on April 18. PA Foreign Minister Malki told reporters that Sultanov's visit was a follow up to Abbas' recent visit to Moscow and stated that talks focused on Israeli policies, including settlement activity, home demolitions and detentions.

Al Ayyam's front page reported, "Egyptian troops amass on borders with Gaza." Citing eye-witness reports, coverage noted a concentration of troops near the Rafah crossing.

Saturday, April 18, 2009

All Palestinian dailies ran similar front page headlines, "Abbas: All parties should abide by principle of two-state solution to end Palestinian-Israeli conflict- Mitchell: Comprehensive peace is in U.S. national interest, We are committed to two-state solution." Reporting noted that Special Envoy Mitchell after his April 17 meeting with Palestinian Authority President Abbas, again stressed that the two-state solution is the only solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Papers noted the, "announcement for the first time" by the current U.S. administration that a comprehensive regional peace is in the U.S. national interest and the interest of Palestinians, Israelis and the peoples of the whole region. Papers also quoted PLO chief negotiator Erekat welcoming Mitchell's statements and commenting that, as Abbas has stated, the U.S. administration must now, "translate this vision into a realistic, political track." Reports further quoted Mitchell from an April 17 statement made after meeting with the Egyptian Foreign Minister.

Al Quds gave inside coverage to a statement released by Congresswoman Lowey's office about her delegation's visit to the Palestinian Territories and Israel. Lowey was quoted stating that the visit "provided the opportunity to conduct oversight of U.S. foreign assistance and develop critical insight that will help the House Foreign Operations Subcommittee to evaluate President Obama's pending Supplemental Fiscal Year 2009 and Fiscal Year 2010 budget

requests."

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al-Quds independent daily runs an editorial under the title "Threats and Dialogue" (04/20): [media reports that] "Israel is waiting for U.S. permission to... attack [Iran] raise many questions, especially after President Obama's statements that he is willing to begin an open dialogue with Tehran based on mutual respect... It is obvious that the Israel of today is the same as the Israel of the past. It still threatens everyone with its military power, even when the new U.S. administration declares itself open to dialogue... if the U.S. and Europe are serious about achieving global peace, security and stability, they should intensify their regional efforts to stop these threats and introduce a new language of dialogue and international legitimacy."

2) Ghasan Zaqtan opines in Al-Ayyam independent daily under the title, "Another Smart Israeli" (04/20): "Again a smart person [Premier Netanyahu] is in charge of the Israeli Government and is

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trying to come up with new ways to waste time and string out negotiations [with Palestinians] just like his predecessors have done, by calling for 'alternative initiatives' ... or adding another pre-condition to Palestinian-Israeli negotiations [recognition of Israel as a Jewish state], a demand that will only plunge negotiations into a vicious cycle and buy [Netanyahu] more time to proceed with his [real] plans."

WALLES